



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

March 30, 2006

# News Release

## **11 charged in ICE crackdown on south Los Angeles counterfeit document mills** *Mills produced fake “green cards,” Social Security cards, and drivers licenses*

LOS ANGELES – Eleven defendants face federal charges today following a massive multi-agency operation led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) targeting a string of counterfeit document mills suspected of supplying a significant quantity of the fraudulent immigration and identity documents being sold on the streets of Los Angeles.

Yesterday morning, ICE agents and investigators from the California Department of Motor Vehicles executed search warrants at seven suspected counterfeit document mills housed in residences in south Los Angeles. Authorities arrested ten of the defendants as part of yesterday’s enforcement action. The remaining suspect was already in custody on unrelated state charges.

During the day-long operation, investigators seized a wide array of document making equipment and materials, including computers, printers, software, and laminates. At one of the locations, agents also recovered a loaded, sawed-off shotgun.

According to the search warrant affidavits, the four-month ICE undercover probe revealed that the targeted document mills were manufacturing a variety of counterfeit immigration and identity documents, such as permanent resident alien or “green” cards, Social Security cards, and California driver licenses. The affidavit details how ICE orchestrated undercover buys of counterfeit documents from the targeted producers for prices ranging from \$100 to \$150 a set. The sets typically included a fraudulent “green card” and Social Security card.

“Trafficking in counterfeit documents poses a serious security vulnerability and contributes to a host of other types of crimes, including identity theft and financial fraud,” said Kevin Jeffery, acting special agent in charge for ICE investigations in Los Angeles. “Our goal is to identify and ultimately dismantle the criminal organizations behind these highly lucrative schemes.”

“Ensuring the security of personal information we are entrusted with and the integrity of California Driver Licenses are truly our top priorities,” said Michael Champion, DMV deputy director of investigations. “Our partnership with the Department of Homeland Security in these enforcement efforts serves notice to those who try to defraud our state and our nation: we will use every resource we can to put you out of business and keep you out of business.”

The subjects arrested in yesterday's operation are expected to make their initial appearance in federal court today. The defendants face a variety of charges involving the sale, manufacture, and distribution of counterfeit documents.

Combating document counterfeiting and identity theft is a top ICE enforcement priority. Over the past two years, the number of ICE investigations targeting identity and benefit fraud nationwide have risen dramatically, increasing from 2,334 investigations in fiscal year 2004 to 3,591 investigations in fiscal year 2005. During that same time frame, ICE arrests nationwide involving these types of cases climbed from 1,300 to 1,391, while indictments surged from 767 to 875.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*